

NOT EVEN PAST



"Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas; Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II" by Emilio Zamora (2009)

Tweet

by *Emilio Zamora*

Relations between Mexico and the United States appear so disappointing these days that we may find it difficult to remember them differently. Mexico-U.S. relations, however, have seen better times and recalling them could serve as a model for what is possible. *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrong in Texas* does this by summoning the memory of World War II, when Mexico and the United States fashioned the closest and most cooperative set of relations that we have ever seen.

The exuberant WWII poster that appears on the book's front cover captures the celebrated unity between wartime neighbors, when Mexico intervened on behalf of Mexicans in the United States and the State Department initiated a campaign to improve relations between Mexicans. Mexico's insistence on elevating racial discrimination to a higher level of importance and the U.S.'s decision to expand its Good Neighbor Policy into the domestic arena, by investigating and settling cases of discrimination during the war, demonstrates how Mexican Americans entered center stage in the political arena of minority and labor politics by way of an

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN

Making History: Houston's "Spirit of the Confederacy"



More from The Public Historian

BOOKS

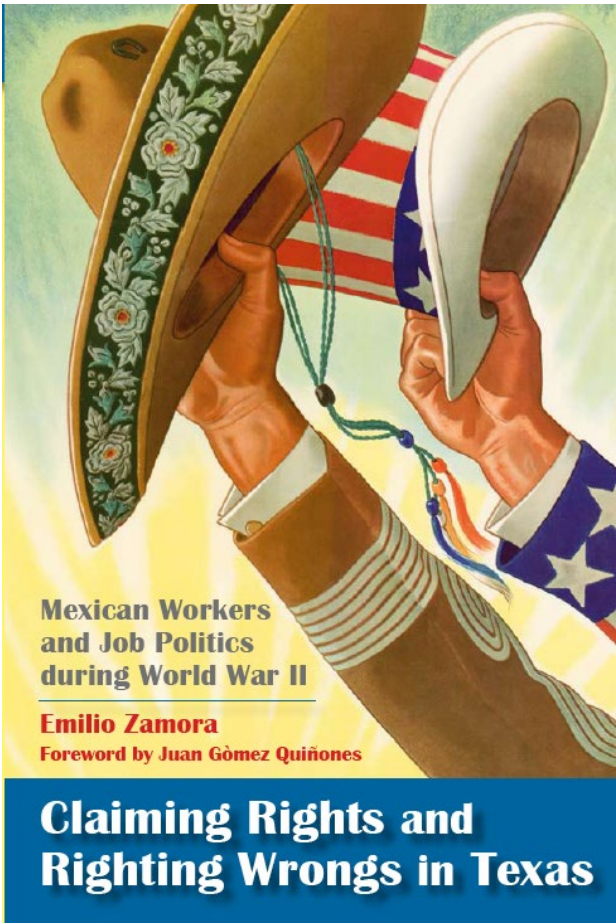
America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States by Erika Lee (2019)



More Books

DIGITAL HISTORY

Más de 72: Digital Archive Review



international, or more precisely hemispheric, body politic.

Mexico's decision to deny their contract workers to Texas farmers who were especially known for their lack of

hospitality towards Mexicans and the State Department's insistence on good neighborliness in Governor Coke Stevenson's administration made the Lone Star state a key site of continued negotiations over racial discrimination and the government's role in combating it.

Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas also shows that state and federal agencies promoting good neighborliness contributed to improvements in the social standing of Mexicans, but only to a minor extent. The expanded wartime economy with its unprecedented employment opportunities must be credited with much of their recovery from the hard times of the Depression. Recovery, however, was uneven for both U.S. and Mexico-born as they typically exited the farms and entered the urban-based and higher-paying manufacturing jobs at a slower rate. Inequality for Mexicans, as well as for African-Americans, remained relatively unchecked.

The increased diplomatic cooperation that promoted good will and improved understanding in diplomatic and ethnic relations also allowed for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to emerge as the one of the leading proponents of equal rights in the United States. Culturally adept at working the English and Spanish speaking worlds, LULAC representatives acted as intermediaries between Mexican communities in Texas and government officials from Washington, D.C., Austin, and Mexico City. As a result, they built a reputation for LULAC as one of the most effective Mexican organizations coming out of



More from Digital History

FILMS & MEDIA

Ayka (Dir: Sergei Dvortsevov, 2018)

the period of the Second World War.

Despite nagging problems like the persistence of racial discrimination and inequality, the unprecedented attention that Washington, D.C. directed at Mexico and the Mexicans in the United States raised postwar expectations for better relations and encouraged further official activism and Mexican agitation for equal rights in the postwar period.

The good relations that Mexico and the United States established during the war years and the policy focus that they placed on discrimination and inequality among Mexicans in Texas may have been primarily intended as a wartime imperative. But then as now, necessary policies that better relations can provide for expanded visions of improved understanding and good will between governments and peoples.

Posted November 5, 2010

More 1900s, Books, Latin America and the Caribbean, Periods, Politics, Race/Ethnicity, Regions, Texas, Topics, United States, Work/Labor



October 02, 2019

More from Films & Media

TEXAS

A (Queer) Rebel Wife In Texas



March 11, 2020

More from Texas

19th century

20th Century

African American History american history Asia

Asia & Middle East book review Brazil British Empire

China Civil War

Cold War

Colonialism communism

cultural history

digital history

Early Modern Europe

Europe film gender history History of Science

immigration India Islam

Latin America

Latin American History Mexico Not Even Past

Public History race religion Russia slavery Texas

Texas History Texas History Day Transnational

Twentieth Century History United States

US History

USSR Womens History

world history World War II

NOT EVEN PAST is produced by

The Department of History

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

We are supported by the College of Liberal Arts

And our READERS

DONATE

CONTACT

All content © 2010-present NOT EVEN PAST and the authors,
unless otherwise noted

Sign up to receive bi-weekly email updates

BOOKS

FILMS & MEDIA

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN

BLOG

TEXAS